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SEN. SMITH



REP. FORD

Congress' anemic role in Viet war troubles senators

BY EDWARD J. MOWERY
News Washington staff
WASHINGTON, Oct. 13 — Rep. Gerald Ford, R-Mich., believes rapport between the White House and Congress on Viet Nam is virtually non-existent.

Sen. Margaret Chase Smith, R-Maine, is convinced Congress has "greatly" surrendered its power to declare war to the President. But she isn't sure that a war declaration in the Viet Nam situation is the answer in this age of atomic retaliation.

Rep. Ford, the House minority leader, and Sen. Smith, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, are among a growing band of lawmakers dissatisfied with an anemic participation of Congress in White House handling of the mushrooming war in Viet Nam.

Sen. Wayne Morse, D-Ore., has already laid blame for the struggle on blunders of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Foreign Relations program.

It is interesting to note, however, that a joint resolution by Congress on Aug. 10, 1964, gave unprecedented, sweeping powers to President Johnson to repel aggression in Southeast Asia with U.S. armed force.

"LIAISON BETWEEN the executive and legislative branches is inadequate," Ford declared, "considering the crucial nature of the problem in Viet Nam. Under present circumstances, Congress is being bypassed insofar as any effective participation or decision-making is concerned."

Ford, who served four years in the Navy in World War II, added:

"The President is running the war in Viet Nam. And I sincerely hope his decisions are right, as the situation is serious."

Sen. Smith, recalling the Korea "police action" and more recent U.S. involvement in this hemisphere, said:

"There is no question that Congress in recent years has greatly surrendered its prerogative of declaration of war to the President. That was certainly the case with intervention in the defense of South Korea, although President Truman characterized it as a 'police action' rather than a war.

"But to the boys who fought in that so-called 'police action,' it was clearly a war. And surely the defense of South Viet Nam is nothing less than a war regardless of what it might be called. Our intervention in the Dominican republic involved shooting and dying."

PRIOR TO WORLD War II, Sen. Smith observed, Congress would have "jealously guarded" its right to declare war.

"The world we live in now," she said, "is not like that of the relatively simple days of the past when there were no nuclear bombs, intercontinental missiles or guerrilla warfare. Today's world is one of complicated grays rather than sharp blacks and whites."

"And the application of direct declaration of war obviously does not apply easily to the complicated grays as to the sharp blacks. I'm not too sure what advantage would be gained by an open declaration of war against North Viet Nam. I doubt seriously it would cause us to increase our effort there any more than the present effort."

Disagreeing with critics who favor an "honest" declaration of war against North Viet Nam, the senator said an "honest" declaration would be against Red China, responsible for Viet Cong incursions. Even this move, she said, is not the answer during the desperate U.S. probe for peace by way of military and diplomatic efforts.

Congress' 1964 delegation of military powers to President Johnson is unequivocal. He is empowered to "take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force," in Southeast Asia. But the authority continues until terminated by Congress.